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PSYCHOLOGICAL MONOGRAPHS
THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

EDITED BY

EDWARD L. THORNDIKE
Professor of Psychology

Percy Bysshe Shelley

An Introduction to the Study of Character

BY THOMAS VERMOREL MOORE

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EDITED BY

EDWARD A. PACE
Professor of Philosophy

6

Percy Bysshe Shelley

An Introduction to the Study of Character

BY

THOMAS VERNER MOORE

PSYCHOLOGICAL REVIEW COMPANY

PRINCETON, N. J.
AND LANCASTER, PA.

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CONTENTS

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| Introduction | I |
| Chapter I. The Analysis of Character | 6 |
| Chapter II. Shelley's Plan of Life | 12 |
| Chapter III. Factors in the Development of Shelley's Plan of Life | 19 |
| Chapter IV. Shelley's Father Complex | 24 |
| Chapter V. The Driving Forces in Shelley's Life | 33 |
| Chapter VI. Hours of Conflict | 40 |
| Chapter VII. The Compensations of Shelley | 47 |
| Chapter VIII. Special Mental Traits | 54 |
| Chapter IX. The Shelley Profile | 59 |
| Chapter X. Evaluation of Shelley's Plan of Life | 60 |

CONTENTS

| | | |
|--------------|--|-----|
| Chapter I | The Science of Zoology | 1 |
| Chapter II | Methods of Zoology | 15 |
| Chapter III | History of the Development of Zoology | 35 |
| Chapter IV | The Division of Zoology into Branches | 55 |
| Chapter V | The Division of Zoology into Classes | 75 |
| Chapter VI | The Division of Zoology into Orders | 95 |
| Chapter VII | The Division of Zoology into Families | 115 |
| Chapter VIII | The Division of Zoology into Genera | 135 |
| Chapter IX | The Division of Zoology into Species | 155 |
| Chapter X | The Division of Zoology into Individuals | 175 |

INTRODUCTION

Our English word character comes from the Greek *χαρακτήρ* which meant originally an instrument for engraving and stamping. Corresponding to its derivation its first use in fourteenth century English in the sense of a distinctive mark, a brand or a stamp. Very early, however, it acquired the figurative sense of a distinctive mental trait. In the seventeenth century it was used to designate "the sum of the moral and mental qualities which distinguish an individual or a race, viewed as a homogeneous whole."¹ By the eighteenth century it had acquired still another meaning, viz.: "moral qualities strongly developed or strikingly displayed," or in terms of popular psychology, strength of will.

The earliest figurative meaning in English was the sense in which it was taken by the first systematic attempt at a study of character. "The Characters" of Theophrastus, the pupil of Aristotle, is an attempt to describe a number of different types of human beings singled out by some one distinctive mark. At the same time, the attempt was made to pick out the other traits that are associated with the distinctive character.

Thus the surly man is described as "one who, when asked where so and so is, will say 'Don't bother me'; or, when spoken to, will not reply."² With this trait, Theophrastus associates various other attributes such as the fact that the surly man swears at the stone which makes him stumble; that he will not wait long for anyone; that he is apt not to pray to the gods, etc.

The plan was admirable, but the goal was not attained; and in spite of various subsequent attempts it still remains an undiscovered pole. The solution is to be found not by accidental observation of an occasional association of traits nor by the delineation of an imaginary type, but by an empirical study of many individuals and of the frequency of association of traits that have been analysed to their lowest terms.

¹ Murray's English Dictionary.

² The Characters of Theophrastus, translated by Jebb and Sandys. London, 1909, page 215.

That certain elementary character traits form definite and constant groupings is probably no mere metaphysical dream but is rooted in the physical constitution of the individual. There is indeed a possible biological foundation for a law of association of character traits. Heymans and Wiersma³ brought forward some evidence to show that certain mental traits are hereditary. A working-over of their data by two of Karl Pearson's students⁴ has shown that these mental traits are hereditary in the same degree in which physical traits are inherited. Now certain physical traits are known to be closely associated. This has been shown by Thomas Hunt Morgan and his students;⁵ and they have attributed this association of physical traits to the degree of closeness in which the actual physical determinants lie in the chromosomes.

So far as I know, the association of physical or mental traits in man has not been adequately studied by empirical and statistical methods. There has been much charlatanism in this field—especially in regard to the association of mental and physical characters maintained by the Lombroso school. There has been, too, a number of studies of correlation of one physical trait with another such as length of arm and length of leg. The group of characters that go with albinism: nystagmus, myopia, pink eye, etc., are well known. But I know of no adequate study of the association of groups of physical characters in man.

Our statistical information about the grouping of mental characters is even more meagre.⁶ And yet if the fundamental idea suggested in early days by Theophrastus is true, such an association should be capable of demonstration. Its value, if it could be definitely established with anything approaching satisfactory completeness, would be inestimable. For if we could determine the presence of the group of traits an individual presents on the surface we could then infer the presence of another group less

³ *Zeitschrift für Psychologie*, vol. 42, 43, 45, 51.

⁴ Elderton and Schuster. *Biometrika*, 1906-1907, V.

⁵ Cf. e.g. *The Mechanism of Mendelian Inheritance*. By Morgan *et al.*

⁶ Joseph Kirk Folsom has made a preliminary attempt. *Pedagogical Seminary*, XXIV, pp. 399-440. Dissertation, Columbia, 1917. Gives an excellent bibliography.

easily subject to observation. It is to be hoped that progress in this line will not be long delayed.

Thorndike in the first volume of his *Educational Psychology* has attempted a complete list of the original tendencies of human nature. Various studies have been made of human traits.⁷ These may be regarded as studies of character from the point of view of the seventeenth century definition of Character as the sum total of the moral and mental qualities possessed by an individual. The difficulty, with all of these studies, is that the original tendencies such as aggressiveness, gregariousness, enthusiasm, etc., have not yet been analyzed to their lowest elements and we do not really know their precise psychological nature.

It is scarcely likely that we would get univocal definitions of such terms as "aggressiveness," "gregariousness," "enthusiasm" from all psychologists. Is the aggressiveness which makes a boy walk around with a chip on his shoulder the same trait that makes him attack an original problem in geometry with promptness, vigor and zest? If so, is the labile condition of the nervous system to all stimuli the essential and elementary character of aggressiveness which leads to a *sudden* response, or is aggressiveness concerned more with the *violence* of the response, or the *excitement* that assures its continuance until success is achieved or failure recognized? Such traits need to be carefully investigated and analyzed to their lowest terms or until they may be so clearly recognized that they are detected with ease even when *masked* by the circumstances in which they may be masquerading. Until then, any studies made on the assumption of these as unit characters are likely to suffer the fate of the early chemical writings based on the supposition of four elements—earth, air, fire, and water. Furthermore, the study of mere fragments of a

⁷ Cattell. *Homo scientificus Americanus* (1903). *Science*, N. S. XVII. Pp. 561-570; Heymans and Wiersma. *Zeitschrift für Psychologie*. 1906 ff. Vol. xlii, xliii, xlv, li; C. B. Davenport. *The Trait Book*, Eugenics Record Office Bulletin, No. 6, 1912. Hock and Amsden. *A Guide to the Descriptive Study of the Personality*. (N. Y.) *State Hospital Bulletin*, Nov. 1913; F. W. Wells, *The Systematic Observation of the Personality*, *Psychol. Rev.*, 1914, xxi. Pp. 295-333.

man's life leaves much to be desired when we seek to understand his behaviour as an individual.

Some character studies aim at classification as the main goal. This has been a decided tendency among French authors. It is an inheritance which has descended from Galen who gave us the four character types: sanguine, choleric, melancholic, phlegmatic, which were supposed to be related to the four cardinal body fluids: blood, yellow gall, mucus, and black gall. Any attempt, however, to classify characters before the elements of character have been adequately investigated, and the law of the association of traits has been established is bound to lead to artificial and unsatisfactory results.

In recent times character has been studied from the psycho-analytic point of view and psychiatrists have interested themselves in trying to investigate the wanderings and maskings of the sex drive and the interpretation of the symbols of phantasy as found in the writings of an author. The difficulty with these studies is that they leave us in doubt as to how far they uncover the analyser himself rather than the personality he investigates. If someone else than the original dreamer gives his associations with the figures and symbols of the dream and these are put together we find out what the dream means to him who gives the associations. What it meant to the original dreamer must remain a mystery.

If one confines himself to the interpretation of symbols, he is likely to be misled. But if he looks for the expression of ideals and yearnings, and correlates the writings of an author with the facts of his life, he is more likely to analyse the writer than merely to reveal himself.

Were it possible to bring the author into a clinic, and get his associations with various passages in his works, much light could be thrown on the meaning of poetry and the mechanism of its productions, as well as the inner drives and mental mechanisms of the poet. This in general is impossible. But if one attempts to take his own associations and not the author's he is very likely as we have said to analyze himself instead of the poet. The lack of the personal associations of the author may in

some measure be supplied by the facts of his biography. The more one studies poets and their lives the more one realizes that their poetry is conditioned by the personal elements of their inner experience. Their poetry is a cryptogram to which the biography supplies the key. The two together reveal a human individual in his innermost being. The biographies give us only the outer shell. The poetry is written in a code that only those can understand who know the poet.

Studies based on analysis and historical investigation are not purely psychoanalytical, for the neglect of the historical is the radical sin of psychoanalysis. They may be termed literary-historical.

This literary-historical method of character study is the one that is here attempted. It is capable of revealing many things about an author but it must be guided by a definite plan if it is to lead to the understanding of an individual and his behavior. The present study is the suggestion of a plan that may help to this end and an illustration is given in an analysis of Shelley.

CHAPTER I

THE ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER

Mental traits are indefinitely numerous but not all are of equal value in the understanding of a personality, at least in our present ignorance of the laws of their combination. When, therefore, we would delineate a mental type we must pick out certain special traits for study to give us the outline that we desire.

It is here that psychiatry comes to our assistance. It has long been familiar with the extreme forms of behavior which individuals manifest under pathological conditions.

But many psychiatrists have failed to see that these extreme forms of behavior are only exaggerated types of normal conduct, that the precox, the manic-depressive, the hysterical, the psychasthenic, etc., are fundamentally modes of reaction to the difficulties of life dependent on so many types of character. Thus Kraepelin regards *Dementia precox* in no sense of the word as a mode of reaction which a certain type of character takes in the presence of the difficulties of life but as a disease that may affect any individual, whatever his mental make-up, provided he is so unfortunate as to be subjected to the influence of a definite toxine. This toxine he looks upon as produced in some manner by a disordered function of the sex glands. Thus the thyroid gland, when stimulated to excessive secretion by pathological conditions, produces a rapid pulse, protruding eyes, a wasting of tissue, an abnormal fatiguability, an over prompt and violent emotional reaction to extraordinary stimuli and incidents, all of which together give the peculiar physical and mental picture of Graves' disease. According to Kraepelin, *Dementia precox* is to the sex glands what Graves' disease is to the thyroid. And so with other mental disorders, their specific form according to him is dependent on some kind of pathological condition, and not due fundamentally and reductively to the type of character which the individual possesses as an original endowment.

Even Jung who has such a profound insight into the psychogenic nature of *Dementia praecox*, said of it: "Nevertheless the mechanisms of Freud do not explain why there originates a dementia praecox and not a hysteria; hence it must be postulated that for dementia praecox there is a specific resultant manifestation of effects (toxins?) which causes the definite fixation of the complex by injuring the sum total of psychic functions. However, the possibility cannot be disputed that the 'intoxication' may appear primarily from 'somatic causes' and seize the accidentally remaining complex and change it pathologically."¹

A very different view of the situation, however, is possible, useful, and probable, if not yet satisfactorily and finally established. The psychoneuroses and psychoses are only exaggerated forms of normal trends. *Dementia praecox* with its manifold subforms, *hysteria* in its various manifestations, *manic-depressive* insanity, *psychasthenia*, *neurasthenia*, are all manifestations of character types. An individual becomes a precox, or a manic depressive, not because he is infected by a toxine that comes from without or is produced by the disordered functions of some endocrine gland; but because his character manifests certain types of reaction under mental and physical stresses. It is because of the various fundamental forms of human character that a disease like *Paresis*, due to a definite toxine secreted in the brain by the spirochete of syphilis, is so protean in its manifestations. The mental picture in incipient *Paresis* may simulate any of the known forms of mental disorders. This fact is to be explained not certainly by the unity of the toxine; but by the diversity of native human dispositions.

Every man, according to this view, has his characteristic trend, precox, or manic-depressive, or hysterical, etc. When in the pages to follow Shelley is termed a precox this does not mean that he was so far deranged that he should have been confined to an asylum; but only that his disposition in its main outlines resembles that of precox patients.

These "psychiatric dispositions" are made up of elements.

¹ The Psychology of Dementia Praecox. Eng. Trans. New York 1909, p. 35.

The elements are not sensory nor intellectual; but they are rather impulsive and emotional forms of mental adjustment to the environment. In a recent article² I have termed the normal mental adjustments of an individual psychotaxes; and used the term parataxes to designate abnormal or excessive psychic readjustments.

The dominant psychotaxes of an individual are the most characteristic elements in his personality. They tell us how he behaves in the difficulties and trials of life. They picture for us his solution to the riddle of existence and that is after all what is most worth while in any man's life. The final character is the resultant of behavior; and the dominant trends, which lead to this resultant, are the psychotaxes.

These may be classified as follows:

- I. Psychotaxes that present no solution for the mental conflict which arises in any difficult situation. These are *depression* and *anxiety*. In the article above referred to, I have indicated how the words *depression* and *anxiety* refer not only to emotions but also to impulsive drives. Thus, for instance, some people are not only sad but have a tendency to remain depressed and nurse their sorrow. Others again seem to experience a positive drive to fret over painful situations. They are common modes of reaction, but, as we shall see, were not dominant in the character of Shelley.
- II. Psychotaxes that present some solution for a difficult situation.
 - I. The defense reactions. E.g. trying to forget and keep the whole affair out of mind. *Retiring from the world* and shutting oneself up in the castle of one's mind. *Incapacitation* either general, as in neurasthenia; or special hysterical disabilities, such as, a functional paralysis, or deafness, or convulsive seizures, etc. *Avoiding the realization of personal blame* by a high sense of personal righteousness, or accusing or suspecting others, or developing delusions of persecution.

² Psychoanalytic Review. July 1921

2. The compensations and sublimations.

Compensation is the opening of channels of satisfaction of a similar but not a higher nature than that which was blocked and thwarted. If channels of a higher symbolic nature are opened the reaction is termed a *sublimation*. Compensations are sometimes trivial, such as, the theatre, novel reading, physical exercise; or of major character, such as, transfer of affection, appeal for sympathy, etc. Religion and social work may be looked upon as the main channels of sublimation.

Some sit down and think a situation over and see what can and ought to be done and then set out to make the most of it. This is a rational readjustment and not a psychotaxis; for the psychotaxes are blind impulsive drives, involuntary, and dependent to a large extent on native disposition.

To study out the modes of readjustment of an individual is an essential step in analysing his behavior. They are manifested in his hours of conflict. Find out what one does in these moments, and you will discover the main currents in his conscious and sub-conscious life.

In many people some unpleasant emotional experience of childhood reverberates through their whole life. Sometimes they have forgotten it; or, at least, are not aware of the relationship between this early experience and their later behavior. Such an emotional experience is termed a *complex*. It is a very important element in understanding a person's behavior and should always be searched for and, if in any way possible, detected. It is betrayed by those things towards which he manifests a strong emotional reaction of hatred or disgust. It associates itself with other elements of a kindred logical nature, or with which it has been merely in contact in the individual's early experience. In Shelley as we shall see the dominating complex was the unpleasantness of his relation to his father, commenced in childhood, deepened, and intensified in manhood.

Man, however, is more than a reflex machine. He has an intellectual as well as an emotional and impulsive life. He, therefore, develops an intellectual plan of life, a theory of existence,

a general viewpoint that shows him what he wants to get out of life.

The following analysis of Shelley is presented as a kind of schematic attempt to study a human character from the individual's life and writings. It commences with the plan of life the ideal or group of ideals that shimmer on the outskirts of one's mental vision and determine the general trend of activity. The plan of life is always present. It is of fundamental importance in determining the general tone of character, but it has been heretofore neglected in most analyses of the human personality.

Alfred Adler, however, in his work on "The Neurotic Constitution" has recognized the importance of what he terms the "imaginary goal of life" or the "accentuated fiction" or at times the plan of life. In fact he recognizes in the neurotic a double plan of life: one unconscious and not in accord with the established principles of social morality and the other conscious and sanctioned by ethics and society. If the two are harmonized, normal behavior results; if the conscious plan meets with shipwreck, the unconscious carries the unfortunate individual away from reality into the barren wastes of a psychosis. Shelley had a conscious plan of life. It would be also possible to distinguish a second plan with unconscious elements in his violent protest against authority, law and order rooted unknown to himself in the hatred of his father. Instead of so doing we have considered the plan of life as composed of conscious elements only and the unconscious factors which constitute what Adler would term the "anti-fiction" have been taken up under the term of the complex.

The study, therefore, proceeds in the next place to a determination of the fundamental complex, a concept for the understanding of whose importance we are indebted to Jung. The attempt is then made to analyse the driving forces in Shelley's life determining not only his actions but also the plots of his poems. His mental adjustments are studied in his hours of conflict, and his ordinary compensations. Finally we come to what has often constituted the sum total of a character study—the special mental traits. These traits are not analyzed to their lowest terms—a task that could only be accomplished by the study and comparison

of many individuals. Such a comparative study alone could also give us the law of association of mental traits—the value of which we have already indicated.

It will be seen, however, that the plan of life, the complex, the driving forces, the mental adjustments give us that which is most valuable in the study of any character, namely, an insight into a human being's peculiar difficulties in life and his contribution to the solution of the riddle of existence.

CHAPTER II

SHELLEY'S PLAN OF LIFE

That a man should consciously or unconsciously have a plan of life is an inherent mental necessity. He has capacities of enjoyment both sensory and intellectual; and nature, nurture, and opportunity develop these along various lines. From the very multitude of his capacities and the manifold blocks to their unhampered realization arises the essential impossibility of satisfying them all, and so a conflict of desires is unavoidable. Out of this conflict issues a consciously or unconsciously accepted plan of life and to know this plan is very important in obtaining a general view of any man's character. It is likely that types of plans correspond to types of character.

Not only is the type of plan characteristic, but also the way in which it is adopted. A rational and cold calculating consideration of the future is one type. A blind emotional drive is another. It is this latter that characterizes Shelley. His plan of life was a reaction to difficulties experienced in childhood, and not a mode of action adopted after the consideration of the possibilities life held out before him. Shelley's way is perhaps the common way—but on this point there is, so far as I know, no statistical evidence.

In the dedication to *The Revolt of Islam* he has outlined this plan and indicated the influences which led to its adoption.

III

Thoughts of great deeds were mine, dear friend, when first
The clouds which wrap this world from youth did pass.
I do remember well the hour which burst
My spirit's sleep. A fresh May-dawn it was,
When I walked forth upon the glittering grass,
And wept, I knew not why: until there rose
From the near schoolroom voices that, alas!
Were but the echo from a world of woes—
The harsh and grating strife of tyrants and of foes.

IV

And then I clasped my hands, and looked around;
 But none was near to mock my streaming eyes,
 Which poured their warm drops on the sunny ground.
 So, without shame, I spake:—"I will be wise,
 And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
 Such power; for I grow weary to behold
 The selfish and the strong still tyrannize
 Without reproach or check." I then controlled
 My tears, my heart grew calm, and I was meek and bold.

V

And from that hour did I with earnest thought
 Heap knowledge from forbidden mines of lore;
 Yet nothing that my tyrants knew or taught
 I cared to learn—but from that secret store
 Wrought linked armour for my soul, before
 It might walk forth to war among mankind.
 Thus power and hope were strengthened more and more
 Within me; till there came upon my mind
 A sense of loneliness, a thirst with which I pined.

Analysing this passage into the elements of his plan of life we find the following:

(1) I will be wise, but with a wisdom which comes from hidden stores of learning. I shall despise the wisdom of the tyrants who teach me and seek knowledge by ways and means which they will regard with horror.

What does he mean here by the forbidden mines of lore? Medwin in his biography (p. 24) tells us how he took special delight in reading the sixpence "blue books" with their "stories of haunted castles, bandits, murderers." This led him on to magic and spiritism, and Rossetti tells us (Vol. I, p. xxxvi) "that he 'went in for' ghosts and fiends with a real eye to business: he studied the occult sciences, watched for spectres, conjured the devil, and speculated on a visit to Africa for the purpose of searching out the magic arcana which her dusky populations are noted for." Traces of this occult lore are to be found in his writings and to it may be ascribed the character of Demogorgon who occupies so prominent a place in *Prometheus Unbound*.

Though in his childish ideas this occult lore held the first place, in the actual realization of his plan it faded much in importance and yielded to the second which became the dominant *motif* in his life and writings.

(2) The second factor is not expressly brought out but is referred to in the words "For I grow weary to behold the selfish and the strong still tyrannize without reproach or check." He was not only weary of beholding it but there is abundant evidence which we shall consider presently, that oppression was the fundamental complex of his life. It dominated his thoughts more than anything else, leading to a tremendous over-compensation that manifested itself in the rejection of authority and a delight in shocking the sensibilities of all those who might be cast in the stereotyped mould of social sanctions and customs.

(3) The third factor "I will be wise, and just, and free, and mild if in me lies."

Shelley undoubtedly built himself an ideal of a perfect man. Byron said of him "He had formed to himself a *beau idéal* of all that is fine, highminded, and noble, and he acted up to this ideal even to the very letter."¹ The last words, if true at all, mean rather that he thought he did. In considering his conflict and defense reactions we shall see that Shelley was one of those who in his own estimation was like the king who can do no wrong. His ideal, furthermore, was fashioned to suit his inner drives and never resulted in any moral conflict or painful struggle to maintain his standard of conduct.

The fragment on Prince Athanase portrays this ideal of a perfect gentleman:

Not his the load of any secret crime,
For nought of ill his heart could understand.

Not his the thirst for glory or command

Nor evil joys which fire the vulgar breast

For none than he a purer heart could have

¹ Quoted by Rossetti, I, p. lxxxv.

Or that loved good more for itself alone.

His soul had wedded Wisdom and her dower
Is love and justice; clothed in which he sate
Apart from men, as in a lonely tower,
Pitying the tumult of their dark estate.

(4) In the last line of the quotation from *The Revolt of Islam* Shelley speaks of "A sense of loneliness, a thirst with which I pined." This thirst was the craving for the affection of one who could understand. He tells us in the next stanza how he sought this one in vain. He refers to his life with Harriet.

Alas that love should be a blight and snare
To those who seek all sympathies in one!—
Such once I sought in vain. Then black despair,
The shadow of a starless night, was thrown
Over the world in which I moved alone."

He then tells how all were false to him till Mary came.

Yet never found I one not false to me,
Hard hearts and cold, like weights of icy stone
Which crushed and withered mine—that could not be
Aught but a lifeless clod, until revived by thee.

Wisdom and justice and the warfare against tyranny were not enough to satisfy the romantic heart of Shelley. He must have some one who could understand his aspirations and to whom he could communicate his ideals. The search for this ideal woman was the dominant positive driving force of his nature.

His poem *Alastor* is his autobiography describing a poet's search but failure to find the ideal woman that his nature craved. The autobiographic character of the poem is expressly mentioned in the apostrophe to the river on which *Alastor* sailed.

O stream,
Whose source is inaccessibly profound,
Whither do thy mysterious waters tend?
Thou imagest my life. Thy darksome stillness,
Thy dazzling waves, thy loud and hollow gulfs,
Thy searchless fountain and invisible course,
Have each their type in me.

In the preface he says: "The poem entitled *Alastor* may be considered as allegorical of one of the most interesting situations of the human mind. It represents a youth of uncorrupted feelings and adventurous genius, led forth by an imagination inflamed and purified through familiarity with all that is excellent and majestic, to the contemplation of the universe. He drinks deep of the fountains of knowledge and is still insatiate. The magnificence and beauty of the external world sinks profoundly into the frame of his conceptions, and affords to their modification a variety not to be exhausted. So long as it is possible for his desires to point towards objects thus infinite and unmeasured, he is joyous and tranquil and self-possessed. But the period arrives when these objects cease to suffice.² His mind is at length suddenly awakened and thirsts for intercourse with an intelligence similar to himself. He images to himself the being whom he loves. . . . He seeks in vain for a prototype of his conception. Blasted by his disappointment he descends to an untimely grave."

His pining away and dying of disappointed love was much overdrawn, for the poem is to a large extent an unconscious appeal for sympathy. It is indeed an expression of his *libido* drive, but it is also an apology for his desertion of Harriet and his gypsy life with Mary. If his very life depended on deserting Harriet and living with Mary, then the world would perhaps look more kindly on a deed which drove his true wife to suicide.

The poem describes an Arab maiden who, like the personalities of a dream, is a composite photograph. She is Harriet for she cannot understand; she brings him food from her father's home as Harriet brought him his sisters' savings when his father expelled him from home. She is also an imaginary person whom Shelley dreamed of as following him and watching him herself unseen on the lake of Geneva.³ And so the Arab maid "Watches his nightly sleep, sleepless to gaze upon his lips parted in slumber."

The Arab maid had no attraction for him. She was no poet.

² He experiences the same inadequacy that Francis Thompson experienced in his love of nature.

³ Cf. Rossetti on this imaginary personality—Memoir in the poetical Works, 1870. I, pp. lxxxii-lxxxiii.

Like Harriet she could not understand. And so in his dream he pictures to himself an ideal woman.

He dreamed a veiled maid
Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.
Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
Heard in the calm of thought; its music long,
Like woven sounds of streams and breezes, held
His inmost sense suspended in its web
Of many-coloured woof and shifting hues.

Knowledge and truth and virtue were her theme,
And lofty hopes of divine liberty,
Thoughts the most dear to him, and poesy,
Himself a poet.

* * * * *

Nor blackness veiled his dizzy eyes, and night
Involved and swallowed up the vision; sleep,
Like a dark flood suspended in its course,
Rolled back its impulse on his vacant brain.

Shelley outlines here his dominant ideal, wisdom and sensuous beauty united in the one woman who understands him and expresses his poetic ideals so perfectly that "her voice is like the voice of his own soul heard in the calm of thought" and so

He eagerly pursues
Beyond the realms of dream that fleeting shade;
He overleaps the bounds.

He searches the lands, he traverses the seas, led by the fetish of his love,

two eyes,
Two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought,
And seemed with their serene and azure smiles
To beckon him.

And so he ever seeks, but finds not; and the starry eyes fade to two lessening points of light gleaming through the darkness and Alastor dies.

No sense, no motion, no divinity—
A fragile lute, on whose harmonious strings
The breath of heaven did wander—a bright stream
Once fed with many-voicéd waves (a dream
Of youth which night and time have quenched for ever),
Still, dark, and dry, and unremembered now.

Here then is Shelley's plan of life to know the charm of hidden
lore, live out the thoughts and actions of a prince's high nobility,
to war against tyranny and to know one who understands him-
self, sees into his very soul and loves him with a sensuous love.
And then? After that there is nothing.

He will awake no more, oh never more!
Within the twilight chamber spreads apace
The shadow of white Death, and at the door
Invisible Corruption waits to trace
His extreme way to her dim dwelling-place.

Adonais VIII.

CHAPTER III

FACTORS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SHELLEY'S PLAN OF LIFE

In Shelley's plan of life we find two elements: a drive and a protest. The drive has in it two components, one affective and the other intellectual.

The affective drive is for an object of sensuous love which must at the same time be capable of understanding and harmonizing with his intellectual ideals. This I have termed above the dominant positive driving force of his nature. It is rooted in human nature and needs no other explanation than humanity itself. *Humanum est amare*. Love is an ineradicable impulse of human nature and its presence is to be assumed and expected, needing no cumbersome teaching of psychoanalysis for its demonstration. Its mode of satisfaction differs in various individuals. It is, however, only one way in which an individual seeks an outlet for the energy of his personality and it need not be aimed at the sensual ideal that hovered before the mind of Shelley.

The intellectual drive took a form that was colored by the protest. Shelley yearned to know, but the object of knowledge must be forbidden lore. He had intellectual ideals, but they must be such as would come in conflict with traditional concepts. Conflict, to him, was a greater desideratum than objective evidence. Knowledge for its own sake was not a vigorous drive in the mind of Shelley. He sought to know what the world disregarded. This was in fact an element of his precox constitution. The precox holds aloof from the common run. He has no desire to be "in the swim," but off in a little nook by himself. Thus Prince Athanase wedded Wisdom

clothed in which he sate
Apart from men, as in a lonely tower,
Pitying the tumult of their dark estate.

And so Shelley lived in Italy rather than in England, his native land; he studied Italian, Spanish, Greek, Arabic, not for prac-

tical needs, but that he might live on in his lonely tower, unlike the rest of mankind, pitying the strong activity of the common, ordinary, ignorant rabble. At present I cannot refer the shut in reaction type of the precox disposition to anything else than native constitution. All minds have this type of reaction in a greater or less degree, but in the precox, it manifests itself unchecked and unbalanced and so he is very different from the hypomanic who frequents the street corners and the "movies."

The love of that which the world merely disregards does not by any means adequately describe Shelley's intellectual ideal. He loved knowledge upon which the sanctions of established opinion frowns down with disapproval. He sought to develop ideals and principles which would be subversive of all that is looked upon as lawfully constituted authority. Why was this? It was because of the negative element of his precox character, the protest; and the explanation is to be sought in the origin of Shelley's insurrection against authority.

This dates back to childhood. Of the very early incidents of Shelley's life we have but little information. Helen Shelley's letters in Hogg's *Life* give us a great wealth of anecdote. She passes over in silence, however, the relations between Shelley and his father. This may be because these relations were unpleasant. By the time, however, that Shelley got to Eton there was evidently no tender feeling of filial affection but an outspoken hate and defiance. Rossetti tells us that "he was known among his schoolfellows for a habit of 'cursing his father and the king'"¹ and that he bestowed upon his father such nicknames as "Old Buck" and "Killjoy."

Before his Eton days he had come into conflict with authority and his school-mates at Sion House. Medwin, a cousin, one of his biographers, was one of the older boys when Shelley came to this school. Hogg says that he entered there at the age of ten. Medwin points out that these days were so unhappy, that they never spoke of them in after life. Shelley seems to have been cruelly persecuted by the fagging of the older boys and to have been misunderstood and mistreated by his masters. Medwin is

¹ Memoir, p. xxviii.

authority for the following amusing incident. He had to compose two lines of Latin poetry on a storm, so he came to Medwin for assistance. His older cousin pilfered from Ovid the following distich,—

Me miserum! quanti montes volvuntur aquarum!
Jam, jam tacturas sidera summa putes.

"When Shelley's turn came to carry up his exercise, my eyes," says Medwin, "turned upon the *Dominie*. There was a peculiar expression in his features, which, like the lightning before the storm portended what was coming. The spectacles, generally lifted above his dark and bushy brows, were lowered to their proper position, and their lenses had no sooner caught the said hexameter and pentameter than he said with a loud voice, laying a sarcastic emphasis on every word, and suiting the action to the word by boxes on each side of Shelley's ears. Then came the comment, "*Jam, jam*,—Pooh, pooh, boy! raspberry jam! Do you think you are at your mother's?" Here a burst of laughter echoed through the listening benches. "Don't you know that I have a sovereign objection to those two monosyllables, with which schoolboys cram their verses? Haven't I told you so a hundred times already? '*Tacturos sidera celsa putes*'² what, do the waves on the coast of Sussex strike the stars, eh? . . . '*celsa sidera*' . . . who does not know that the stars are high? Where did you find that epithet? . . . in your *Gradus ad Parnassum*, I suppose. You will never mount so high"; (another box on the ears which nearly felled him to the ground) . . . "*putes!* You may think this very fine, but to me it is all balderdash, hyperbolical stuff"; (another cuff) after which he tore up the verses and said in a fury, "There, go now, sir, and see if you can't write something better."

It is worth noting, from the point of view of the Adlerian over-compensation theory, that this child, only a little over ten,³ re-

² Medwin wrote from memory and misquoted the line. See note p. 22, Forman's edition of his *Life of Shelley*. Oxford, 1913.

³ He had been forced to commence his Latin studies, when only six, with a clergyman in the neighborhood of his home.

acted to this incident by excelling in Latin poetry while at school and devoting his whole life to poetic compositions.

At the same time this and similar experiences made him despise and hate authority. "Nothing that my tyrants knew or taught I cared to learn." "I will be wise and just and free and mild as in me lies," "for I grow weary to behold the selfish and the strong still tyrannize without reproach or check." His unsympathetic father who placed him in Sion Hall, his domineering school mates, his unjust, ignorant, and tyrannical masters, and all the authority that they represented in Church or in State were involved in the protest of his whole being against authority. So that when he left Sion Hall and went to Eton he was already an Atheist and cursed his father and the king.

At Eton, Shelley waged continual warfare against authority but to a large extent by mere boyish pranks calculated to tease and annoy his masters. According to Rossetti he was probably expelled for some offense the nature of which is not known.

In 1810 he went to Oxford where he met Hogg. Here he gave expression to his anti-religious views in a pamphlet, on which his friend Hogg was collaborator, and which they published anonymously under the title of *The Necessity of Atheism*. He was expelled for refusing to deny the authorship of the brochure. Hogg wrote a note of protest and on being interrogated and declining to reply was also expelled.

His father insisted that he should break off his friendship with Hogg and on his refusal not only closed the doors of his home to him but refused to give him a single penny of support. His sisters aided him by saving up their pocket money and sending it to him by Harriet Westbrook, a young girl whom he finally fell in love with and married. His father ever afterwards remained relentless and never gave his son an allowance until circumstances forced a legal settlement.

Shelley's life exemplifies the eternal tragedy of tyranny and rebellion—the blind unreasonableness of domineering and unsympathetic authority and the reaction of the oppressed by a logically unjustifiable but psychologically explicable all-embracing revolt. Shelley's father and his tactless, domineering masters

welded a pathological association in his mind between authority and all that can be connected with it or that it stands for and the unhappy experience of his childhood and youth.

Let those who deal with the minds of children learn a lesson from the life of Shelley.

CHAPTER IV

SHELLEY'S FATHER COMPLEX

The cardinal complex in Shelley's life thus became the tyranny of an irreconcilable father. Shelley gives expression to this complex and revenges himself upon his father in *The Cenci*. He himself appears in this tragedy as Giacomo who is endeavoring, as Shelley did in reality, to seek a law by which he could force his father to settle something upon him. Giacomo the first born son, as Shelley himself was, complains (Act II, Scene ii, lines 10-13) that

The eldest son of a rich nobleman
Is heir to all his incapacities;
He has wide wants, and narrow powers. . . .

This is only a picture of Shelley himself at war with his father and relentlessly cut off without a proper allowance.

When in a dream one pictures a person against whom the dreamer has a grudge it is much overdrawn, and base emotions and criminal acts are often imputed which have no basis in reality and the dreamer knows that they have not. And so in Shelley's tragedy the old Count Francesco Cenci appears as a monster of cruelty who celebrates the death of his sons with a banquet, imprisons his daughter and finally rapes her.

But Shelley is not content with these dream accusations against his father. He kills him; making his own daughter rise up against him and plot his murder.

Unlike Oedippus Tyrannus, we do not find any of Shelley's personages marrying his mother. Shelley's father complex is therefore to be distinguished from the Oedipus complex of the psychoanalysts. When incest appears in Shelley it is between brother and sister not between son and mother. Shelley's letters to his mother or his reference to her in other letters are rather cold. Once he boasts of the liberality of her opinions. But one

looks in vain for even the ordinary expressions of tender feelings towards his mother. Shelley hated his father because of his harshness. And this dates, as we have seen, from a rather early age. The difficulties of childhood were but increased in later years and his father was harsh and unrelenting after Shelley was finally expelled from Oxford and later married a tavern keeper's daughter. It is this feud that dominated Shelley's mind in the composition of the *Cenci*.

It is his own father against whom he vents his spleen when he writes:

He has cast Nature off which was his shield,
And nature casts him off, who is her shame;
And I spurn both. Is it a father's throat
Which I will shake? and say, "I ask not gold;
I ask not happy years; nor memories
Of tranquil childhood; nor home-sheltered love;
Though all these hast thou torn from me, and more;—
But only my fair fame; only one hoard
Of peace, which I thought hidden from thy hate,
Under the penury heaped on me by thee."

III, i, 286-295.

In this search for the manifestation of the father complex of Shelley I have commenced with the *Cenci*, because Giacomo in this drama gives us a key to the whole situation. Giacomo is the first born son of a nobleman, so was Shelley. Giacomo had wide wants and narrow powers, so had Shelley. Giacomo was at war with his father, so was Shelley. Giacomo was cut off by his father without a proper allowance, so was Shelley. It is clearly evident that the relationship between Giacomo and the old Count Cenci parallels that between Shelley and his father. Giacomo therefore is Shelley and if that is true the old Count Cenci is Shelley's father.

If, now, we look at the characteristics of the Count we can find them again in the old king who figures in *The Revolt of Islam* though there is no Giacomo here to help in the identification.

The old king in *The Revolt of Islam* just like Count Cenci was utterly insensible to the sufferings of others. He was also

insensitive to the debt of gratitude due to the kindness showered on him by those who, after a triumphant revolt against his tyranny, spared his life. For when his counter revolt brought him again in power

The Tyrant passed, surrounded by the steel
Of hired assassins, through the public way,
Choked with his country's dead,—his footsteps reel
On the fresh blood—he smiles. "Ay, now I feel
I am a King in truth!" he said; and took
His royal seat, and bade the torturing wheel
Be brought, and fire, and pincers, and the hook,
And scorpions, that his soul on its revenge might look.

X, viii.

This heartless old man is the same type of personality as Count Cenci. He represents authority for he is king and in both respects he is the replica of Shelley's childhood picture of his father. But this time instead of wreaking just vengeance on his tyrannical, unfeeling father,—Shelley pictures how he would have suffered and deserved sympathy had he fallen into his father's hands. When we consider the fictions mentioned below of imaginary persecutions of Shelley by his father, and also the evidence of his keen craving for sympathy, we shall have no trouble in seeing that psychologically *The Revolt of Islam* is the same dream as the Cenci—but with the tables turned. The turning of the tables gains for Shelley his much craved sympathy.

There can be no doubt that Shelley himself is the hero of the poem, persecuted by the king, as Giacomo was persecuted by Count Cenci.

It is Shelley who dramatically throws himself into the hands of the tyrant and cries to his minions:

"With me do what ye will. I am your foe!"
The light of such a joy as makes the stare
Of hungry snakes like living emeralds glow
Shone in a hundred eyes.—"Where, where
Is Laon? Haste! fly! drag him swiftly here!
We grant thy boon?"—"I put no trust in ye;
Swear by the Power ye dread"—"We swear, we swear!"
The stranger threw his vest back suddenly,
And smiled in gentle pride, and said "Lo! I am he!"

XI, xxv.

Shelley's father complex and his craving of unjust persecution, for the sake of sympathy, were the dominant psychological features in the weaving of his dream of the Revolt of Islam.

By way of transition to the next poem in which his father complex makes itself manifest, let us note the similarity between the punishment of Laon in the earlier part of *The Revolt of Islam* and the condition in which the hero is found at the opening of *Prometheus Unbound*.

Laon was arrested without reason by the tyrant King and bound to a rock overhanging the town below.

They bore me to a cavern in the hill
 Beneath that column, and unbound me there.
 And one did strip me stark; and one did fill
 A vessel from the putrid pool; one bare
 A lighted torch; and four with friendless care
 Guided my steps the cavern-paths along.
 Then up a steep and dark and narrow stair
 We wound, until the fiery torches' tongue
 Amid the gushing day beamless and pallid hung.

They raised me to the platform of the pile,
 That column's dizzy height:—the grate of brass,
 Through which they thrust me, open stood the while,
 As to its ponderous and suspended mass,
 With chains which eat into my flesh, alas!
 With brazen links my naked limbs they bound:
 The grate, as they departed to repass,
 With horrid clangour fell, and the far sound
 Of their retiring steps in the dense gloom was drowned.

III, xiii-xiv.

The analogy with Prometheus is evident. Both Laon and Prometheus are personifications of Shelley.

Later on Laon was liberated by an old hermit. It is interesting to note that Dowden recognizes in this old man the physician, Dr. Lind, the friend of Shelley's boyhood, who occupied a place in his affections that should have been that of his father. Dowden writes that Dr. Lind "lives in Shelley's verse as the old hermit who liberates Laon from the dizzy platform on which he stood enchained until his brain reeled and maddened, who bears

the youth to that curious chamber strewn with rarest sea-shells and tapestried with moss, where the sage had gathered many a wise tome, and tends him there until Laon's withered brain is soothed and healed."¹

In the *Prometheus Unbound* we have another exemplification of the analogy between the dream and the myth woven by the poetical imagination of the author. Among the characteristic attributes of the dream are its pictures of a wish fulfilment—the attainment of something yearned for by the dreamer and the relentless revenge wreaked on some one who has done him harm. In perfect accord with this law of the dream, Shelley pictures his final triumph over his own father who drove him from home and was unrelenting and unmerciful to the end.

To understand this poem fully we must also appreciate another law of the mind. Once an individual has crossed another in anything of serious moment there is a tendency to hate not only him but everything with which he is connected. A pathological association is welded between the personality of him who injures and everything for which he stands. Shelley's father stood for authority; and so Shelley revolted against all that law holds sacred. This revolt was accentuated by the harsh domination of his teachers and the bullying of older boys in his school days. Shelley, therefore, became a thorough anarchist and rose up against the sanctioned customs of society, God, religion, law, and order; and dreamed of the triumph of the aboriginal and untrammelled man. This dream is woven for us in his *Prometheus Unbound*.

It is the same dream as *The Cenci*, but clothed in other symbols. In *The Cenci* his father is portrayed as the base and unnatural creature who rejoiced over the death of his sons and the rape of his daughter. And so Shelley wreaks his vengeance upon him by portraying him in such horrid form and then slaying him by assassins hired by his daughter. Those familiar with the psychoanalytic interpretation of the dream will not be surprised at such an interpretation. *The Cenci* shows that unconsciously

¹ Edward Dowden, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, 1866, I, p. 33.

Shelley would have liked to kill his father. This does not mean that such a thought ever actually entered his conscious mind.

In the same way he revenges himself on his father in *Prometheus Unbound*. But the father idea is here extended by the law of pathological association. Shelley's father here stands as the representative of law, order, might, power, and creative majesty in the person of Jupiter who is a travesty of God Almighty. Just as Francesco Cenci is an overdrawn figure of an unnatural father, so Jupiter is pictured as a harsh and unbending tyrant, cruel, without sympathy, taking a fiendish delight in the torture of one who would not bow to his authority, as Shelley would not submit to parental discipline.

And so Prometheus in the opening words of the poem addresses the Almighty:

Monarch of Gods and Daemons, and all Spirits—
 But One—who throng those bright and rolling worlds
 Which Thou and I alone of living things
 Behold with sleepless eyes! regard this Earth
 Made multitudinous with thy slaves, whom thou
 Requitest for knee-worship, prayer, and praise,
 And toil, and hecatombs of broken hearts,
 With fear and self-contempt and barren hope;
 Whilst me, who am thy foe, eyeless in hate,
 Hast thou made reign and triumph, to thy scorn,
 O'er mine own misery and thy vain revenge.
 Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours,
 And moments aye divided by keen pangs
 Till they seemed years, torture and solitude,
 Scorn and despair—these are mine empire:—
 More glorious far than that which thou surveyest
 From thine unenvied throne, O Mighty God!

Such words as these refer to no mythological personage. They are Shelley's reaction to the theistic concept, determined, not by reason, but by the emotional resonance of his father-complex.

Prometheus himself is a fusion of several concepts. Shelley himself recognized in him a satanic element.

"The only imaginary being resembling in any degree Prometheus, is Satan; and Prometheus is, in my judgment, a more

poetical character than Satan because, in addition to courage, and majesty, and firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, he is susceptible to being described as exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandizement."²

Prometheus is Satan in so far as he is rebellious against God. But Shelley would idealize his Satanic majesty and remove all hate and self-seeking. And so he makes him the soul of man who alone in the world is capable of resisting in his moral life the will of the Almighty.

In the third act Jupiter complains:

All else had been subdued to me; alone
The soul of Man, like unextinguished fire,
Yet burns towards heaven with fierce reproach, and doubt.

And so Prometheus is humanity idealized of whom Shelley dreams as resisting God till God himself is finally overcome by Demogorgon.

Who is Demogorgon?

Panthea thus describes him when the veil fell from before him as he sat on his ebon throne:

I see a mighty Darkness
Filling the seat of power; and rays of gloom
Dart round, as light from the meridian sun,
Ungazed-upon and shapeless. Neither limb,
Nor form, nor outline yet we feel it is
A living Spirit.

Act II, Scene iv.

He is one who when asked who "fills the faint eyes with falling tears" and "leaves the peopled earth a solitude" answers with satanic sarcasm, Merciful God.

In Murray's English Dictionary we get the following account of the word Demogorgon: "Name of a mysterious and terrible infernal deity. First mentioned (so far as known) by the Schol-

² Shelley's Preface to Prometheus. H. B. Forman's edition of the Works of Shelley, II, p. 140.

³ P. 216, 4-6.

iast (Lactantius or Lutatius Placidus? c. 450) on Statius *Theb.* IV. 516, as the name of the great nether deity invoked in magic rites. Mentioned also by a scholiast on Lucan *Pharsalia*, VI, 742. Described in the *Repertorium* of Conrad de Mure (1273) as the primordial God of ancient mythology; so in the *Genealogia Deorum* of Boccaccio. The latter appears to be the source of the word in modern literature (Ariosto, Spenser, Milton, Shelley, etc.)”

Shelley's interest in magic while at Eton has already been described. It was the reaction of his mind against authority and the established religion, with which authority was associated. And so in the dream of Prometheus he conjures spirits from the dead and finally makes the demon of magic triumph over Divinity. No revolution could be more complete than the revolution of the universe in which Satan triumphs over God. It is this dream that Shelley unfolds in Prometheus.

There is another element in the character of Prometheus. This element is Shelley himself. Dream personalities are often composite photographs. The dream is a kind of delusion of grandeur. Shelley is the ideal man who triumphs by Satanic might over the Almighty power which like all power in Shelley's eyes was inherently wicked. And so Prometheus and Demogorgon are purified of the elements that are most objectionable in Shelley's conscious philosophy—that is hate and cruelty. This probably means that Shelley finally conquered or outgrew his hate for his father and forgave him the wrongs he did him.

Prometheus is the liberator of mankind from the thralldom of theistic concepts and therefore in this dream the final result is the triumph of Shelley's ideals.

And so “thrones were kingless and men walked one with the other even as spirits do”; and women were frank, beautiful and kind,

gentle radiant forms,
From custom's evil taint exempt and pure;
Speaking the wisdom once they could not think,
Looking emotions once they feared to feel,
And changed to all which once they dared not be.

"Sceptres, tiaras, swords, and chains, and tomes of reasoned wrong" were but "the ghosts of a no more remembered fame."

Jupiter, the tyrant of the world, in whatever form he has been worshiped by man, is known no more, his shrine is abandoned.

The loathsome mask has fallen. The man remains,—
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man.
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself; just, gentle, wise: but man.
Passionless? no:—yet free from guilt or pain.

CHAPTER V

THE DRIVING FORCES IN SHELLEY'S LIFE

The driving forces in Shelley's life have been indicated in part in the study of his plan of life. Thus we have shown on the basis of his own self-analysis in *Alastor* that the dominant drive was the craving for an ideal woman of sensual charm and the intellectual ability to understand his poetical and philosophical concepts. This ideal woman was never found. One of the elements of tragedy in his life was his tendency to idealize a woman who attracted him. Thus he idealized his first wife, Harriet, thinking that she was capable at least of being elevated to his poetic sphere. When disillusioned and disappointed, he met Mary Godwin, she was promptly idealized; and he forsook Harriet and went off to the continent with Mary. Mary had poetic appreciation and some poetic ability, but even with her he was not fully satisfied.

There are a number of things in his life and writings which indicate that had Shelley lived, Mary might have gone the way of Harriet.

Epipsychidion, written after his marriage with Mary, is a love poem to an Italian girl. In that he expresses his principles on the married life:¹

I never was attached to that great sect
Whose doctrine is that each one should select
Out of the crowd a mistress or a friend,
And all the rest, though fair and wise, commend
To cold oblivion; though it is in the code

¹ The lines here quoted occur also in an earlier draft of the poem which according to Mrs. Shelley was written before he met Emilia—though the name Emily occurs towards the end of the preliminary fragment. The fragment does not contain the invitation mentioned below to fly with him to his Eden in the purple West and lacks the living intensity of the final production. Cf. Note on lines connected with *Epipsychidion*. Cambridge. Edition of Shelley. Boston, 1901. P. 436.

Of modern morals, and the beaten road
 Which those poor slaves with weary footsteps tread
 Who travel to their home among the dead
 By the broad highway of the world, and so
 With one chained friend, perhaps a jealous foe,
 The dreariest and the longest journey go.²

That a real conflict was actually brewing at this time is made likely

- a) by the fact that Shelley in this poem invites the Italian girl to whom it was dedicated to fly with him to his far Eden of the purple West. That there was some sting in the invitation is evinced by the fact that Mary Shelley in editing his poems appended explanatory notes to all the longer poems with the solitary exception of *Epipsychidion*.
- b) A poem to Edward Williams written in 1821 indicates a feeling of discontent which seems to relate to his married life with Mary. This is the same year in which Shelley was idealizing Emilia Viviani to whom he dedicated his *Epipsychidion*. He tells how the flowers have told him that "She loves me not" and complains sadly that there was truth to the sad oracle and hopes that

there is a place of peace
 Where *my* weak heart and all its throbs will cease.

- c) In Ginevra he speaks of bridesmaids "envying the unenviable" and of marriage as

life's great cheat—a thing
 Bitter to taste, sweet in imagining.³

The "eternal womanly" first in one form and then in another was the main positive driving force in Shelley's life. No woman in particular but his dream of an ideal woman was the intellectual source of the drive.

All his life long "two eyes, two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought," "seemed with their serene and azure smiles to

² Lines 147-159.

³ Cf. Hereon Rossetti's note. Poetical Works of Shelley, I, cxiv.

beckon him," and "obedient to the light that shone within his soul, he went, pursuing." But no earthly eyes when really gazed upon ever satisfied his poetic soul. All that was human crumbled into dust, but the drive remained and he sought, but sought in vain. This drive was the source of endless discontent and forced him to paint again and again in his poems the ideal woman whom he had never met.

The negative driving force of his life also makes itself manifest. This negative driving force is the protest against authority. We have already seen how this was manifested in his poetical works. It showed itself also in his political activities. He paid a visit to Ireland and took up the cause of Catholic emancipation because Ireland, downtrodden by existing authority, appealed to the mechanisms of his character. Some of his prose works indicate the same complex of revolt against the established order: *A Vindication of Natural Diet*, a little book in which he urges a reform of diet to strike at the root of the abuses of legislation: *A Refutation of Deism*; *A Proposal for Putting Reform to the Vote*; *On a Future State*, a fragment in which he argues against immortality.

Closely akin to the craving for love is the yearning for sympathy. This was developed in Shelley to a pathological degree.

The craving has various manifestations. It is in fact most remarkable to see to what extent men, as well as women, will go to obtain the sympathy of their fellow beings. How many a little pain and ache is exaggerated or even fabricated that one may see the gaze of a pair of loving anxious eyes and feel the gentle stroking of a tender hand. Were Shelley's illnesses affected by the craving for sympathy?

In a letter to Miss Clairmont⁴ Shelley speaks of a nervous irritability caused by his pains—which "if not incessantly combated by himself and *soothed by others*, would leave me nothing but torment in life."

The distinguished physician, Vacca, apparently found no organic disease in Shelley. It is quite likely, therefore, that much

⁴ Quoted in Dowden's *Life*, Vol. II, p. 356.

of Shelley's illness was a functional overflow due to the craving to be soothed.

Another form in which the craving for sympathy manifests itself is to let others see how badly you are treated. In case, however, one is not sufficiently wronged, or is only justly punished, the mere publication of the facts will not gain for him the much craved sympathy. Under such circumstances the account that the sufferer gives of his misfortunes is often a gross misinterpretation of the true facts in the case. It is likely, that the misinterpretation is not a conscious lie, but merely a statement colored by bias. Sometimes children, and even adults, do something to provoke retaliation that others may see how badly they are treated. One child who was brought to the Johns Hopkins Dispensary actually did himself what, if others had done to him, would certainly have merited the sympathy of any passer by. When provoked by the children with whom he was playing he would run into the street and throw himself down in front of a moving vehicle and cry out: "See what you have gone and made me do." This, however, is an extreme case. Most cravers for sympathy instead of any such childish attempt to get what they desire, content themselves with imaginary incidents in which they are unjustly persecuted, if the real events of life do not bring upon them anything that may be distorted into an unjust persecution. And such was the case with Shelley.

Rosalind and Helen is a dream in which the dominant *motif* is this childish craving for sympathy.

Rosalind's husband left a will in which he untruly accused her of being an adulteress and secretly holding that the Christian creed was false; and, therefore, if she did not depart from her home within three days, and if afterwards she ever sought to see her children again they would be disinherited and all their patrimony turned over to their next of kin "a sallow lawyer, cruel and cold."

This is merely an overdrawn picture of an incident in his own life. Shelley deserted his wife and children. After his wife's suicide they remained in the custody of her father, John Westbrook. Mr. Westbrook attempted to gain possession of them by

filing a suit in the name of the children asking the Court of Chancery to appoint a guardian. The bill of complaint maintained that the father of the children was not a proper person to bring them up, because he deserted his wife to cohabit unlawfully with another woman, derided the Christian religion, and denied the existence of God. As the case proceeded, the question narrowed down to Shelley's opinions on marriage and the family unit. The judge, Lord Eldon, finally decided that Shelley not only maintained that there was no such thing as marriage, but was also immoral in his conduct, and that, therefore, in view of the principles he held, he was no proper guardian for his children.⁵

When the bald facts are presented they do not necessarily secure sympathy for Shelley. But Rosalind is driven from her home and children by a false accusation of adultery. Shelley was truly accused of adultery. Rosalind was suspected merely of secretly holding that Christianity was false. Shelley's theological opinions dropped out of the discussion, and the question narrowed down to one of fact whether or not he was actually immoral. Anyone would sympathize with Rosalind, many would be incensed at the conduct of Shelley. So Shelley dreamed of Rosalind and no doubt thought that the same sympathy was due him as should be given to Rosalind and so compensated himself for the storm of criticism that his conduct brought down upon him.

The second part of the poem merely continues the same *motif*. Shelley is personified in Helen's husband, Lionel, whom the "ministers of misrule" seized upon

and bore
His chained limbs to a dreary tower
In the midst of a city vast and wide:—
For he, they said, from his mind had bent
Against their gods keen blasphemy.

And so Lionel was imprisoned for his religious convictions.

⁵ Cf. The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley by Edw. Dowden. Vol. II, ch. iii.

Soon, but too late, in penitence
Or fear, his foes released him thence.
I saw his thin and languid form,
As, leaning on the gaoler's arm—
Whose hardened eyes grew moist the while
To meet his mute and faded smile.

Too late the deliverance came, for Lionel, owing to a disease contracted in prison, finally wasted away and died. Poor Lionel! Poor Shelley! No one ever imprisoned him but still it was sweet to dream in childish fashion of how fast tears would gush and fall from many who had not wept before, if they could but see how Shelley suffered as Lionel.

This craving for sympathy not only appeared in his poetry, but was so pathological that it manifested itself in delusions of persecution. Rossetti relates the following incident:

"At the beginning of May, 1816, Shelley and Mary, with her infant son William, born on the 24th of January, and Miss Clairmont, again went abroad, reaching Paris on the 8th of the month. The practical reason for the trip was probably the obvious one—that they felt inclined for it: but Shelley somehow conceived that there was a more abstruse reason—viz., that his father and uncle . . . were laying a trap for him with the view of locking him up, and that Mr. Williams, the agent of Mr. Madocks of Tanyrallt, had come down to Bishopgate, and given him warning of this plot, which the poet believed to be only one out of many that his father had schemed for the same purpose. That Shelley made such an allegation is certain from the testimony of Mr. Peacock; and that the allegation was untrue is convincingly represented on the same testimony."⁶

Rossetti relates another incident which shows that Shelley so strongly craved the sympathy due the martyr that he seems to have fabricated another delusion.

"Somewhere about this time, Shelley (we are told) having called at the Pisa Post-Office, an English officer in the Portuguese service apostrophized him with the exclamation: 'What! are you that damned atheist Shelly?' and, without more ado, struck him

⁶ Memoir in the Poetical Works of Shelley, I, p. lxxxii.

to the ground with a stick, stunning him at the moment. He was a tall and powerful man. Shelley looked up his acquaintance, Mr. Tighe, . . . 'who lost no time in taking measures to obtain satisfaction.' The proficient in theism and blackguardism was traced to the hotel of the Tre Donzelle, and thence to Genoa, whither Mr. Tighe (and it is said Shelley also) followed him: but he was never run down. This is another of the singular stories told by Shelley, and discredited by most of his biographers: the inclination of my own mind would be to accept it, were it not that I find Mr. Trelawny a decided disbeliever."⁷

It is much more easy to understand such an incident as a delusion fabricated by his craving for sympathy for his being persecuted—the same craving that manifests itself in *Rosalind and Helen*—than it is to comprehend the psychology of the sudden attack launched by an unknown officer at the mere hearing of the name of Shelley. It really seems that there was an element of the grandiose in this remarkable delusion.

⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. cxxvi.

CHAPTER VI

HOURS OF CONFLICT

The characteristic modes of adjustment of a human being are best seen in his hours of trial. It is then that his character reveals itself by spontaneous reactions that it is impossible to suppress.

The supreme trial of Shelley's days was the disintegration of his married life with Harriet. It was, however, a trial that did not extend over a very long period. This, in itself, is a characteristic trait. Some individuals are so restless under unhappiness that by defense reactions and compensations they soon escape from an intolerable situation and do not sink under it, brooding over their calamity in a deep depression. Shelley was one of these. Like all human beings he felt sorrow, but it was a goad that stimulated him to avoid it. It brought his defense reactions into activity; and, all unconsciously, his heart sent out tentacles that grasped at whatever compensation might be in reach. Shelley is thus separated from the depressive reaction type—even though in *Alastor* he pictures himself as pining away for grief. In his preface to this poem he thus speaks of his ideal poet.

"He images to himself the Being whom he loves. . . . He seeks in vain for a prototype of his conception. Blasted by disappointment, he descends to an untimely grave." This is merely an appeal for sympathy. He wants to picture himself as wasting away for grief, because in such a state sympathy will be lavished upon him.

During this crisis of his life Shelley gives no evidence of the wasting depression he idealized for himself. Though he writes to Hogg: "My friend you are happier than I. You have the pleasures as well as the pains of sensibility. I have sunk into a premature old age of exhaustion."¹ These words are to be taken

¹ Quoted from Edw. Dowden's *Life*. London, 1886. Vol. I, pp. 408-9.

as an appeal for the sympathy of his friend rather than the expression of a fact. For, a little later, he tells us how he is active with compensations involving more labor than any depressed person wasting away with his sorrow could ever attempt. He is studying Italian again, reading Beccaria though it involved forced attention. A few months later he ventures to attempt to raise three thousand pounds for Mr. Godwin.² Such activities as these were incompatible with anything approaching a depression.

But that he really suffered cannot be doubted. The dominant driving force of his nature was, as we have pointed out, the yearning for an ideal woman who would combine sensual beauty with intellectual powers capable of understanding him and his poetic aspirations. Gradually he came to realize that Harriet did not understand him and, what was more, she never could.

The dominant driving force of his nature had not led to his marriage with her. She had never appeared before him as his ideal woman uniting sensual charms with intellectual abilities. He had been driven to his marriage by his father complex. She seemed to him an unfortunate creature persecuted by her father as he was by his; and so he rose up as her defender and delivered her from tyranny and oppression by marrying her. It was one of his many acts of protest against the domination of authority whether justifiable or not. And when it was all over he tried to elevate her to his poetic level and for a while she responded. But after the birth of her first child she found in her babe another outlet for her affections and took less kindly to her husband's ideals. She did not like to read poetry and "trouble the golden gateway of the stars." The practical problems of life absorbed her attention. And so she appeared indifferent though her letters to her friend, Mrs. Nugent, after the separation indicate that this was not really the case.³ Nevertheless Shelley felt that she was cold and thus complains in his poem to Harriet written in May, 1814.

² Dowden, *op. cit.*, p. 417.

³ Cf. The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley. Ed. by Roger Ingpen, London, 1914. Vol. II, Appendix I, Harriet Shelley's Correspondence.

O trust for once no erring guide!
 Bid the remorseless feeling flee;
 'Tis malice, 'tis revenge, 'tis pride,
 'Tis anything but thee;
 O deign a nobler pride to prove,
 And pity if thou canst not love.

In *Alastor* he pictures the poet wasting away for grief because he could not find his lady love.

Upon an ivied stone
 Reclined his languid head, his limbs did rest,
 Diffused and motionless, on the smooth brink
 Of that obscurest chasm;—and thus he lay,
 Surrendering to their final impulses
 The hovering powers of life.

This is his apology for his desertion of Harriet. I sought my lady love. Had I not found her I would have died. I had looked for her in vain in Harriet, and was I to waste and die? She came to me in Mary, one whose charms I felt, and who could understand my soul. He said to his friend Peacock: "Everyone knows that the partner of my life should be one who can feel poetry and understand philosophy. Harriet is a noble animal but but she can do neither."⁴

We see here nothing but the drive of the pleasure-pain principle. "I wanted Mary and I was unhappy with Harriet" sums up the whole situation. There is no trace of a moral conflict. Nor at this period of his life was there any basis for such a conflict. Long ago he had done away with the possibility of any such trouble in his life by his revolt against authority brought on by the harsh experience of his childhood days and the unrelenting severity of his father. That revolt had extended itself to everything that authority upholds and so had swept away the ordinary moral ideals of the social order in which he lived. Without moral ideals there can be no moral conflict. And so in this period of his life as in all others of which we have any trace, Shelley's conflict was not between moral ideals that he was struggling to maintain and his innate cravings for blind satisfaction;

⁴ Note p. 434-5, Vol. I of Dowden's Life.

but between the drive to seek the satisfaction he desired and the blocks that reality set in the way of its attainment.

A second time of conflict came when he heard of the suicide of Harriet. This brought on essentially the same struggle but in a new field. When the problem of the desertion of Harriet was acute, he felt that he would have to justify himself in the forum of his own conscience and also in public opinion. His excuse to himself is given in *Alastor*: I should have died under the burden had I tried to keep up my unhappy life away from the ideal woman whom I loved. His excuse to his friends accentuated the shortcomings of Harriet—a noble animal she was indeed, but she could not rise to my lofty poetic and philosophical world. I did my best to elevate her but she sank back to the low levels from which I raised her. She simply could not understand poetry and philosophy. And that after all was a *conditio sine qua non* in any woman who was to be my wife.

When the news of Harriet's suicide came to him, it precipitated a severe conflict between the reproach of conscience and his ideal of a perfect gentleman. The resolution of the conflict admitted of no self-reproach. It excused him completely and so his high opinion of himself was maintained. He remained the noble Prince Athanase of his dreams.

That the conflict was very severe is abundantly proved.

"All authorities agree in testifying to the painful severity with which the poet felt the shock, and the permanence of the impression. Leigh Hunt says that Shelley never forgot it; it tore him to pieces for a time, and he felt remorse at having brought Harriet in the first instance into an atmosphere of thought and life for which her strength of mind had not qualified her."⁵

I have looked in vain for any expression of sorrow by Shelley that involved the recognition of the crime of his desertion. He defends himself in this crisis against the realization of moral guilt and against ideas that would cloud his present happy life with Mary Godwin. His responsibility is referred to something far in the past which after all was an act of magnanimity on his part—a condescension which at most was an error of judgment.

⁵ Rossetti, *Memoir*, p. xciii.

He made a mistake, but that mistake came from his liberality. He often boasts of this liberality in his heroes who reflect his own personal ideals. He defends himself against a sense of guilt for deserting his pregnant wife and little child and returning her to the harshness of a father from whom he once delivered her. He does not want to think that he is responsible for the two years of misery that terminated in her suicide. He attributes all guilt to her family in a letter to Mary Godwin.

"Hookham, Longdill, everyone, does me full justice; bears testimony to the upright spirit and liberality of my conduct to her. There is but one voice in condemnation of the detestable Westbrooks. If they should dare to bring it before chancery, a scene of such fearful horror would be unfolded as would cover them with scorn and shame."⁶

This was the most serious conflict of his life. It was a conflict between his self ideal and the realization of a crime that would have dashed that glittering statue from its pedestal and revealed himself to himself as he really was.

In *Alastor* he draws his ideal of a poet, which was only the ideal he tried to impose upon himself, not by victory nor by moral conquest, but by dreaming of what he should be and flattering himself that in himself he realized his dream.

The fountains of divine philosophy
Fled not his thirsting lips: and all of great
Or good or lovely which the sacred past
In truth or fable consecrates he felt
And knew.

Again when in the fragment on Price Athanase he says

For none than he a purer heart could have,
Or that loved good more for itself alone;
Of naught in heaven or earth was he the slave.

he is depicting his ideal of himself.

When, therefore, Harriet's suicide made him face the crime of deserting his wife and imposing on her two years of a miser-

⁶ Letter 248 from *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*. Edited by Roger Ingpen, 1914. Vol. II, p. 534.

able existence from which she sought relief in drowning, his defense reactions cast a screen about this stain upon his pure heart and noble mind and he says:

- (1) "Everything tends to prove, however, that beyond the shock of so hideous a catastrophe having fallen on a human being once so nearly connected with me, there would in any case have been little to regret."⁷
In plain words, Harriet after I deserted her descended so low that she is not worth mourning. Some few months later he spoke of her as a "frantic idiot."⁸
- (2) Everyone, furthermore, bears testimony to *my* upright spirit and *my* liberality of conduct.
- (3) The persons really responsible for her suicide are the members of her own family who treated her so cruelly.
- (4) I am indeed in some measure to blame; not indeed for a moral crime, but a mistake made possible by my generosity and nobility of mind. It was a wrong for me to have taken pity on her and elevated her to my superior sphere of thought and life.

This conflict reveals a characteristic trait and it is with this that we are interested and not the merits of the case. There are some people who see their faults in an exaggerated light. There are others who cannot see them at all. Shelley belonged to the latter class.

In the over compensation of his revolt against tyranny, he got rid of the burdensome load of the ideals of conscience and kept only their spangled coverings. He would be good in dreams but not in reality. The mechanism of his defense reactions made this possible and by shifting responsibility and fabricating dishonest excuses he maintained in the citadel of his mind his barren and empty poetic dreams.

Shelley is a type. He has many replicas of whom we might say that the price of self-satisfaction spares them much pain, but leaves them destitute of that true nobility of soul about which

⁷ Letter cited above.

⁸ Rossetti, p. xciv. It is generally conceded that before the separation Harriet gave her husband no cause to complain of her conduct.

they dream, but for which they are unwilling to enter into the moral conflict by which alone it may be gained.

After all, by flying from the moral conflict, peace is not obtained. Crime will out. The skeleton rattles his bones in the closet. The defense reactions give way from time to time and the soul is face to face with itself. And so it was with Shelley. One of his most intimate friends⁹ said that he never forgot the suicide of Harriet.

⁹ Leigh Hunt. Cf. Rossetti, p. xciii.

CHAPTER VII

THE COMPENSATIONS OF SHELLEY

Thus we see one of Shelley's characteristic modes of reaction in the difficulties of life. He defends himself against them. He was at this time at least no brooder over ills. He could not bear a painful situation. It stimulated him to action even though this was a headlong retreat. He could not honestly face a situation and pass true judgment on himself and take the blame that was his due. His mind was utterly intolerant of self-accusation. He had to be satisfied with himself and so his ideas and judgments of himself were manipulated that he might still remain in his own estimation the Prince Athanase who had no secret crime and did not even understand aught of ill, but was just and innocent and pure.

That he was so sensitive also to the feelings of others came from his craving for sympathy. His activity in defending himself is rooted in this craving to have others take his viewpoint and sympathize with him. This has also something to do with his self-justification. If he himself cannot take his own point of view who else can? If he cannot sympathize with his own state will he not be blamed by others rather than pitied? So the first step in securing the good graces of others was to establish himself securely in the citadel of his own self-estimation. In this way Shelley got rid of anxiety and sorrow.

But what did he do for positive enjoyment? What were his compensations? At Sion House his chief compensation was friendship—to some extent with Medwin but mainly with a boy about his own age to whom he wrote his essay on *Friendship*. There seems to have been an element of homosexuality in this compensation. "There was a delicacy and a simplicity in his manners, inexpressibly attractive. . . . The tone of his voice was so soft and winning, that every word pierced into my heart; and their pathos was so deep, that in listening to him the tears have

involuntarily gushed from my eyes. . . . I remember we used to walk the whole play-hours up and down by some moss-covered palings, pouring out our hearts in youthful talk. We used to speak of the ladies with whom we were in love, and I remember that our usual practice was to confirm each other in the everlasting fidelity, in which we bound ourselves towards them, and towards each other. I recollect thinking my friend exquisitely beautiful. Every night when we parted to go to bed, we kissed each other like children, as we still were."¹

His minor compensations at Sion House were cheap stories and the imaginations that they stimulated.

At Eton, friendship again constituted his chief compensation.

"While at Eton he formed several sincere friendships; although disliked by the masters and hated by his superiors in age, he was adored by his equals. He was all passion—passionate in his resistance to injury, passionate in his love. . . .

He became intimate also, at Eton, with a man whom he never mentioned, except in terms of the tenderest respect. This was Dr. Lind, a name well known among the professors of medical science. 'This man,' he has often said, 'is exactly what an old man ought to be. Free, calm-spirited, full of benevolence, and even of youthful ardour; his eye seemed to burn with supernatural spirit beneath his brow, shaded by his venerable white locks; he was tall, vigorous, and healthy in his body; tempered; as it had ever been, by his amiable mind. I owe to that man far, ah! far more than I owe to my father; he loved me, and I shall never forget our long talks, where he breathed the spirit of the kindest tolerance and the purest wisdom.'"²

The praise, love and fellowship in joy and sorrow that Shelley at this period received from boys of his own age probably stimulated that innate yearning for sympathy which ever afterwards was an insatiable craving of his nature.

Dr. Lind he idealized and on him he fixated a boy's father-love which had never before found a place of rest. These two things made his unhappy life at Eton a burden that could be

¹ Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley by Thomas Jefferson Hogg with an introduction by Prof. Edw. Dowden, London, 1906. Ch. I, pp. 29-30.

² Hogg, *op. cit.*, ch. 2, pp. 33-34.

borne.³ His minor compensations consisted in spiritualism and chemistry, both being particularly charming, because forbidden; and, therefore, offering an outlet for his spirit of revolt. Cursing his father and the king and shocking the sensibilities of the devout afforded him also an outlet for his lively temperament.

As far as one can gather from the account of Hogg, Shelley's days at Oxford seemed to have been happy, full of interest and opportunity. His friendship with Hogg constituted his greatest source of happiness and he had no great sorrow or disappointment for which it acted as a compensation. He was living out his plan of life as far as possible under the circumstances. His father-complex still dominated his intellectual life, which continued to be a protest against the established order though not so bitter as when at Eton. Metaphysics, chemistry, in the sense of alchemy, and poetry continued to amuse him. His metaphysics finally led him as we have seen to the publication of a pamphlet entitled *The Necessity of Atheism*.

He and Hogg as we have said were expelled from the university because they declined to deny its authorship. His father refused to receive him home unless he broke off completely with Hogg, and so Shelley was thrown on the world. It was his first serious contact with the trials of life and much compensation was found in the friendship with Hogg. Then came the loving pity of his sisters who saved up their pocket money and sent it to him by Harriet Westbrook.

And now for the first time he felt the full charm of the fetish of his love.

Whose eyes have I gazed fondly on,
And loved mankind the more?
Harriet! on thine:—thou wert my purer mind;
Thou wert the inspiration of my song.⁴

³ Dr. Lind seems to have been a doubtful influence for good in the life of Shelley. When asked who taught him to curse his father he answered, "My grandfather, Sir Bysshe partly; but principally my friend Dr. Lind, at Eton." Hogg, *op. cit.*, p. 91. "He used to go to tea with the meek and benevolent physician at Eton; and after tea they used to curse King George the Third, for the doctor had really been, or firmly believed that he had been, cruelly wronged by that pious and domestic, but obstinate and impracticable monarch." Hogg, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

⁴ To Harriet Shelley. Rossetti edition, Vol. I, p. 1.

He was not destined, however, to find permanent satisfaction in human love. The lustre of all human eyes faded and he experienced this first in the waning of his love for Harriet. The lines written in November 1815 may perhaps refer to this death of his love.

Thine eyes glowed in the glare
Of the moon's dying light.
As a fen-fire's beam
On a sluggish stream
Gleams dimly, so the moon shone then;
And it yellowed the strings of thy tangled hair,
That shook in the wind of night.

The moon made thy lips pale, beloved;
The wind made thy bosom chill;
The night did shed
On thy dear head
Its frozen dew, and thou didst lie
Where the bitter breath of the naked sky
Might visit thee at will.⁵

He sought compensation in intellectual pursuits, Italian, the reading of Beccaria *Dei delitti e pene*, in writing to Hogg and recalling their happy days at Oxford. He sought out the companionship of his friends and when neither compensations nor his usual defense mechanisms enabled him to forget, laudanum secured for a moment the end which the mechanism of the mind failed to attain. His strong drive to do all in his power to forget is pictured in an account given by Peacock of a visit to Shelley during this period of his life.

"His eyes were bloodshot, his hair and dress disordered. He caught up a bottle of laudanum, and said, 'I never part from this.' He added, 'I am always repeating to myself your lines from Sophocles.

Man's happiest lot is not to be;
And when we tread life's thorny steep
Most blest are they who earliest free
Descend to death's eternal sleep.⁶

⁵ Rossetti ed., II, pp. 148-149.

⁶ Quoted from Dowden, Vol. I, p. 433.

He had already met Mary Godwin and the conflict involving the desertion of Harriet was going on within him. It lasted only a few weeks. Soon the lure of Mary's dark eyes became the dominating influence in his life and compensated him entirely for the waning of his love for Harriet.

Upon my heart thy accents sweet
Of peace and pity fell, like dew
On flowers half dead; thy lips did meet
Mine tremblingly; thy dark eyes threw
Their soft persuasion on my brain,
Charming away its dreams of pain.⁷

After deserting Harriet, his love for Mary so fully satisfied him that he seemed for a time supremely happy. He lived out his plan of life with one who understood him, better than any other human being. He protested against tyranny of all sorts in his poems. He enjoyed intellectual pursuits. He reveled in the glories of nature, living out a poet's dream with nothing to do but enjoy himself and write poetry.

Leigh Hunt thus describes his daily routine at this period:

"He rose early in the morning; walked and read before breakfast; took that meal sparingly; wrote and studied the greater part of the morning; walked and read again; dined on vegetables (for he took neither meat nor wine); conversed with his friends, to whom his house was ever open; again walked out; and usually finished with reading to his wife till ten o'clock when he went to bed."⁸

To this work he seems to have added at times regular visits to the poor.

He had everything a poet could desire and still he was not happy. We have already seen that at the time of his tragic death the eyes of Mary were already becoming two lessening points of light gleaming through the darkness.

In 1820 (about two years before his tragic death) he felt that love itself was as mortal as man.

⁷ To Mary Woolstonecraft Godwin. Rossetti's ed., II, p. 297.

⁸ Quoted by Rossetti. *Memoir*, p. xcvi.

First our pleasures die, and then
 Our hopes, and then our fears: and, when
 These are dead, the debt is due,
 Dust claims dust—and we die too.

All things that we love and cherish,
 Like ourselves, must fade and perish.
 Such is our rude mortal lot:
 Love itself would, did they not.⁹

He sought compensation then in his friendship for Edward Williams.

When I return to my cold home, you ask
 Why I am not as I have lately been?
You spoil me for the task
 Of acting a forced part in life's dull scene,—
 Of wearing on my brow the idle mask
 Of author, great or mean,
 In the world's carnival. I sought
 Peace thus, and but in you I found it not.

Perhaps one element in Shelley's final discontent was a homosexual trend existing in childhood and dormant in his later life but rendering impossible a complete fixation of his love on any woman.

But at all events his poem entitled *A Lament*, written in 1821, indicates that he had lived out his plan of life and found it wanting, that all compensation was crumbling and he had no longer any hope for the future.

O World ! O life! O time!
 On whose last steps I climb,
 Trembling at that where I had stood before,—
 When will return the glory of your prime?
 No more—Oh never more!

Out of the day and night
 A joy has taken flight:
 Fresh Spring, and Summer, Autumn, and Winter hoar,
 Move my faint heart with grief,—but with delight
 No more, oh never more.

⁹ Death. Rossetti's ed., Vol. II, p. 332.

Such then were the compensations of Shelley. They were found inadequate, before he was thirty, when the crumbling of his plan of life left him at the edge of a desert of discontent which perhaps he would never have been able to traverse. Hope, at all events, was gone, some months before his death of which he had a strange presentiment.

Lilies for a bridal bed,
Roses for a matron's head,
Violets for a maiden dead;
Pansies let my flowers be;
On the living grave I bear
Scatter them without a tear,
Let no friend, however dear,
Waste a hope, a fear, for me.¹⁰

¹⁰ Remembrance. Rossetti's ed. II, p. 274. See in the Appendix, pp. 1002-3 of Ingpen's ed. of his letters, the letter of transmission of this poem and the one to Edw. Williams. They indicate that he was not less depressed when out of his poetic moods than when in them. He wanted the poems kept secret and that was probably because they revealed the hidden trend of discontent with which he was struggling.

CHAPTER VIII

SPECIAL TRAITS OF CHARACTER

A number of special traits of character manifest themselves in every individual. Each trait has no doubt a deep signification though we do not know at present what this hidden meaning may be. It is quite possible that several such traits must be at bottom all one and the same thing, that is named differently when applied to diverse objects or manifests itself in different ways. The study of character will not make great progress till the analysis of these character traits has to some extent been accomplished. When that is done the problem of the linkage and association of character traits may be undertaken with some hope of a successful solution. As a preliminary step we may merely enumerate, more or less in a haphazard fashion, the character traits of the individuals whom we study. And so the following traits of Shelley's character are presented without any attempt at analysis. There has been no effort to make the list exhaustive.

Shelley's imaginal type. I have attempted to determine Shelley's imaginal type by counting the images found in a few samples of his poetry much in the same way as the pathologist makes a differential count of the white blood corpuscles. For this purpose I chose *Alastor* and the 6th Canto of *The Revolt of Islam* beginning with the nineteenth stanza. Both selections refer to similar situations.

I realize, however, that it is much more difficult to pick out types of images than forms of leucocytes. My own images are very poor and I had to read slowly to make the images come. I may have missed many but think that the count has some relative value. Visual images are particularly hard to count exactly and one must use his judgment in deciding whether successive words are separate images or all part of one and the same picture. I made three separate counts to see how they would agree. The agreement indicates that the relative proportion in Shelley's

imagery is not a matter of chance but is expressive of his typical flow of thought.

| | Alastor 1st hundred | Alastor 2d hundred | The Revolt of Islam | Total | % |
|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-------|------------------|
| Visual | 53 | 55 | 53 | 161 | 53 $\frac{2}{3}$ |
| Organic | 18 | 17 | 17 | 52 | 17 $\frac{1}{3}$ |
| Auditory .. | 15 | 17 | 15 | 47 | 15 $\frac{2}{3}$ |
| Tactual & Temp. ... | 6 | 4 | 10 | 20 | 6 $\frac{2}{3}$ |
| Olfactory .. | 4 | 5 | 3 | 12 | 4 |
| Kinaesthetic. | 4 | 2 | 1 | 7 | 2 $\frac{1}{3}$ |
| Taste | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | $\frac{1}{3}$ |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 300 | 100 |

In the above list sight is underrated because of the difficulty of counting the successive images in a complex. Touch is over-rated because I have included under touch such phrases as: "to meet her panting bosom," "folded his frame in her dissolving arms," etc. These pertain more properly to the organic. Shelley seldom brings out the fine touch qualities such as soft, smooth, rough, etc. When they do appear they are more often, in my samples, of an unpleasant rather than a pleasant character. Had doubtful cases been excluded, touch would have ranked below smell.

On the other hand he was keenly sensitive to the organic, e.g. gasping breath, shuddering limbs, tremulous sobs, breathless kisses, thirsting lips, sinking heart, etc.

Shelley was but slightly sensitive to the pleasures of touch if at all. Smell, however, is mentioned with distinct characteristics and also temperature, e.g. icy caves.

Of taste he seems to have little appreciation. This perhaps prepared the way for his becoming a sporadic vegetarian and a total abstainer. Hogg says of him in his college days "he could have lived on bread alone without repining"¹ and that though he enjoyed sweets "he rarely sought for them or provided them for himself."

Beautiful images of sound and sight abound in his lines. But his keenest joys seem to have come from vision. His descrip-

¹ Life of Shelley, ch. 3, p. 86.

tion of Cythna and the lady of Alastor's dream are mainly in terms of vision. Again and again he returns to the beauty of the eyes.

Shelley's intellectual endowments. His biographers repeatedly speak of his excellent memory. He learned so easily that it was not necessary for him to work hard. He did not study much at Sion Hall or at Eton; but at Oxford he became much interested and Hogg tells us that he spent sixteen out of the twenty-four hours in reading. He was a good classical student. "A pocket edition of Plato, of Plutarch, of Euripides, without interpretation or notes, or of the Septuagint, was his ordinary companion; and he read the text straight forward for hours, if not as readily as an English author, at least with as much facility as French, Italian, or Spanish."²

Shelley was no empiricist. He was the very opposite of Darwin and would have to be classed among the most deficient of observers.

"He was able, like the many, to distinguish a violet from a sunflower, and a cauliflower from a peony; but his botanical knowledge was more limited than that of the least skillful of common observers, for he was neglectful of flowers. He was incapable of distinguishing the delicate distinctions of structure which form the basis of the beautiful classification of modern botanists."³ In this respect Shelley resembled Francis Thompson.

His interest in chemistry was not an empirical one but a weird search for hidden lore, made all the more interesting, because dabbling in fire and explosives was a forbidden sport.

In spite of Hogg, Shelley was not a philosopher. His attempts at philosophy were fragmentary and dictated as we have seen by emotional trends and hidden drives.

He played chess but was not a good hand at the game.⁴

Shelley's emotional life is characterized by a remarkable fickle-

² Hogg, p. 85.

³ Hogg, p. 75.

⁴ Rossetti, Memoir, p. cxxx.

ness in love. The fading of his love for Harriet and his sudden infatuation with Mary and the waning of his love after only a few years of married life is an evidence of this to say nothing of the incident with Emilia.

He loved animals. He could not bear to see them cruelly treated. He depicts this trait in himself in describing Alastor.

He would linger long
In lonesome vales, making the wild his home;
Until the doves and squarrels would partake
From his innocuous hand his bloodless food,
Lured by the gentle meaning of his looks.

He was fond of children, a trait which according to Hogg, could be demonstrated by numerous examples.

Among his natural virtues was a spirit of generosity, so boundless and unreasonable, that it approached a vice. He gave money when he could not afford it; gave it often when he was not asked. This is only another example of how reason or cold calculating motives had little influence on his conduct. His inhibitions were poorly developed; he acted on the spur of the moment, once knocking a man down who disagreed with him.

He wanted to be a reformer but he disliked politics.

"With how unconquerable an aversion do I shrink from political articles in newspapers and reviews! I have heard people talk politics by the hour, and how I hated it and them! I went with my father several times to the House of Commons, and what creatures did I see there! What faces! what an expression of countenance! what wretched beings!"⁵

Associated with his hatred of politics was a tendency to shrink from human society. Thus on Aug. 16, 1821, he wrote to his wife:

"My greatest content would be to utterly desert human society. I would retire with you and our child to a solitary island in the seas, would build a boat and shut upon my retreat the flood gates of the world."⁶

⁵ Rossetti quoted from Hogg. *Memoir*, p. clvii.

⁶ *Letters of Shelley*, edited by Ingpen, 1914. Vol. II, p. 905.

This was the precox trend in Shelley's character which counteracted effectively his drive to reform the world and overthrow authority. United with his natural gifts it made over the would be anarchist into a poet who, instead of *doing* anything to work a change in the order of things, merely *dreamed* of revolution and revolt.

CHAPTER IX

THE SHELLEY PROFILE

What then are the dominant traits that outline the character of Shelley? What lines strike one most in his intellectual visage?

They are first of all the precox elements of negativism and defense.

The bold, violent protest against all authority rooted unconsciously in the hatred of his father.

The defense reaction of avoiding the realization of personal blame.

The drive to retirement which made it impossible for him to do anything practical towards carrying out his ideas of reform.

The craving for sympathy which lent his dominantly precox disposition an hysterical tone.

His poetical rather than metaphysical or empirical mental endowments.

His visual-organic-auditory type of imagery with its poverty in the cruder elements of touch and taste, lending no doubt the charm of refinement to his general disposition.

The fickleness of his love and the generosity of his soul.

These are the dominant traits that constitute the Shelley profile and stand out prominently in his life and writings.

CHAPTER X

EVALUATION OF SHELLEY'S PLAN OF LIFE

If we look at Shelley's plan of life from the point of view of a pragmatist we must conclude that in some way it was fundamentally inadequate. For a plan of life, to be successful, must lead to peace and contentment *usque ad finem vitae*. Shelley's mode of life did not attain this result. In fact it would seem that when he died, having scarcely attained the age of thirty, another crisis in his life was probably impending. At least there were strong indications of a fundamental discontent. Nor can we take the pessimistic view that all the world is discontented and no plan of life can bring peace and happiness.

If one pays attention to the newspaper headlines, or the cases that roll into a clinic, or that demand special attention in the confessional, one is likely to get the impression that all the world is miserable and discontented. But it is the extreme type of case that makes the most noise in the world, the thousands of happy ones afford no spicy items for the daily press.

In a questionnaire sent out by the Bureau of Social Hygiene of New York City to a thousand married women, the following report was given on the item of happiness.¹

| | |
|---|-------|
| Absolutely, Extremely, Entirely, Perfectly..... | 49 |
| Happy | 822 |
| Fairly, Rather, Not Wholly, Not Particularly..... | 28 |
| Mixed, Intermittently, In General, etc..... | 37 |
| Unhappy | 44 |
| Special Cases | 8 |
| Unanswered | 12 |
| | <hr/> |
| | 1000 |

It would seem from this investigation that there is no warrant for the pessimistic view that happiness is not attainable.

If Shelley did not attain to a satisfactory solution of life it was not because the problem is insoluble, but because there was something wrong with his solution.

¹ The Social Hygiene Bulletin, 1921, VIII, p. 11.

If we look at his solution to discover what was lacking we find one possible explanation in the fact that it was dominantly a blind drive for self-satisfaction in an object of sensuous love. There is no concept of the accomplishment of any task, the fulfilment of a mission of value to anyone except himself. He sought peace and contentment in human love and found it not, perhaps, because he always sought himself and never another.

True, you say, but did he not plan social reform and the betterment of the race? Was he not, therefore, interested in the welfare of others?

Had Shelley's plans for reform been dictated by a pure desire to help fallen humanity, they would have been a factor in his life that might have changed him entirely and have enabled him to live more than thirty years without experiencing the grumblings of discontent.

But his ideas of reformation were dictated not by love, but by hatred. They flowed from his father complex. He did not want to build up, but to tear down. So that the love of mankind was only incidental and the hatred of the institutions of authority in general and of his own father in particular was the essential element, not in a drive but in a protest. It is love that blesses and not hate, a truth to which Shelley himself would have been the first to subscribe. He did not, however, know himself and did not realize that hate and not love dominated his plans of reform.

Had he been truly led by gentle charity his deeds of kindness would have been less sporadic. His actions would have been dictated by an essential element in his plan of life and not by the emotional appeal of an incident. Charity would have drawn him out of his precox inner self. It would have led him forth to action. He could never have been content, as he was, with dreaming of reforms and giving expression to those dreams, not in deeds, but in poems.

This is the radical sin of the precox; to dream much, but accomplish nothing. It was characteristic of Shelley's life; and in this he gives us an example, not to follow, but to avoid.

Shelley's craving for sympathy made him dishonest with himself so that he could not see his own faults and so he was forced

to justify his failings rather than to correct them. So intense at times was this craving that it led to delusions of persecution, fabrications without evidence.

Shelley's father-complex led to his protest and rebellion against authority. It made him cast off the principles of the common code of morals and so he was able to live as he pleased without let or hindrance from the principles of morality. And still he did not attain to happiness, for vanity of vanities and all is vanity, and there is no consolation for the human heart, nor hope of peace, nor place of rest, nor haven from the storm of life, except in the bosom of the eternal principles of right and wrong, and in the accomplishment of what is worth while in the sight of God and man.

